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Islamic Fundamentalism: Implications for the Arab World and the United States

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National Intelligence Estimate

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NIE 36-87
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ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ARAB WORLD
AND THE UNITED STATES

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Information available as of 3 December 1987 was used in the preparation of this Estimate, which was approved by the National Foreign Intelligence Board on that date.

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SCOPE NOTE

This Estimate examines the phenomenon of rising Islamic sentiment and activism in the Arab world through the end of the century, the impact of the Islamic revival on Arab attitudes toward the United States and the Soviet Union, and considers possible consequences for US interests and policies. Because the Islamic revival manifests itself differently in Muslim societies throughout the world, this discussion is confined to Arab countries where some generalizations can be made about the causes of the revival, its manifestations, and its direction. Several key non-Arab countries—particularly Israel and Iran—are considered, but only as they affect the revival in Arab societies. []

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The Estimate attempts to analyze the Islamic revival in the broadest possible context. It considers the effects of the revival on individual behavior, social patterns, and political activism, and discusses the various components of the revival. “Islamic fundamentalism” is often misleadingly used in popular literature as an all-embracing term for the revival, but, for the purposes of this Estimate, we distinguish the following as tendencies of the revival:

- *Fundamentalist Islam*. A belief that the *sharia*—the sacred law of Islam—should be strictly followed and that Islamic society should be purged of non-Islamic influences. Among fundamentalists, there are many approaches to this goal, ranging from moderate and evolutionary to radical and revolutionary with many positions between the extremes.
- *Traditionalist Islam*. A belief that the *sharia* law contains the guiding principles for Islamic society and that society should be steered back to more authentic forms of Islam’s beliefs and practices. Attitudes of traditionalists and fundamentalists have much in common; however, traditionalists tend to be less political and programmatic, and more accepting of the difficulties of implementing a body of law over 1,000 years old.
- *Reformist Islam*. A belief that *sharia* law represents an ideal that should guide an adaptation of Islamic society to the modern world. Reformists, referred to also as Islamic modernists, revere ancient Islam but see a requirement for Muslims to develop its modern interpretations. []

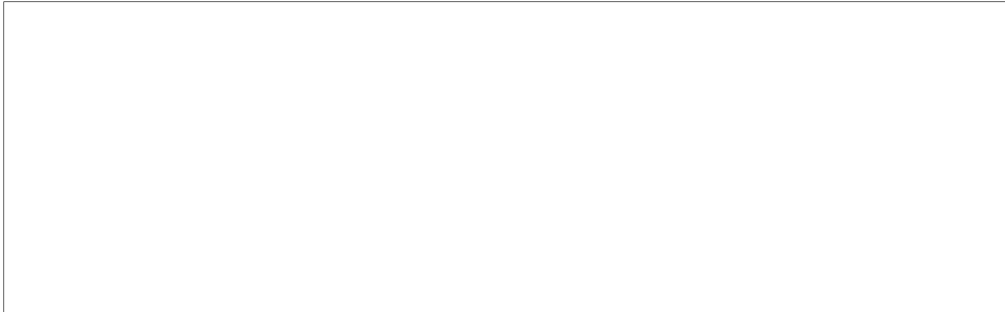
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This is the first estimate on the Islamic resurgence as a regionwide phenomenon. While this paper examines the diverse doctrines and elements of the revival and the impact on Arab and regional politics, the Estimate does not contain a country-by-country assessment. A brief description of the revival in individual Arab countries is included in annex A. 

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KEY JUDGMENTS

The Islamic resurgence is likely to be the most powerful, widespread political force in the Arab world for the remainder of this century. It is generating a shift toward a more authentic Islamic culture in many parts of the region, and focusing antiforeign sentiment—particularly against the West—within broad segments of Arab society. No Arab regime appears immediately threatened by the kind of upheaval that brought about the Islamic revolution in Iran, nor are any US alliances in immediate danger. However, the destabilizing influences of the Islamic revival may weaken especially vulnerable regimes, force more significant accommodations of religious demands, and contribute to or act as a catalyst for more broadly based political turmoil. Tunisia, Egypt, and Bahrain are at greatest risk from these destabilizing influences over the next five years. [REDACTED]

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Views concerning the impact of the Islamic revival over the long term divide roughly into optimistic and pessimistic schools. The former sees the potential for resurgent Islam acting as a stabilizing agent holding society together in the face of enormous social and economic challenges, helping to pace change according to human tolerance, and preserving core values and traditions that give meaning to societal advancements. The pessimistic view focuses on the reactionary impulses that distort Islamic tradition, the rigidity that often prevails over reasonable application of Islamic thinking, and the zealotry that makes compromise, flexibility, and adaptability dangerous offenses. [REDACTED]

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Although deeply divided in many ways, sentiment in the revival is dominated by three common elements:

- Promotion of Islam's concept of justice.
- Opposition to corrupt and oppressive government.
- Rejection of foreign influence.

These sentiments have spread through the lower-middle and middle classes to challenge Arab leaders and their backers, creating a sometimes stark difference between the popular Islam of the discontented and the establishment Islam of ruling families and governing elites. [REDACTED]

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We believe the majority of Arab Muslims still accept their leaders and the secular features of daily life, and are not committed to

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significant religious reforms. However, this majority is clearly susceptible to the sentiments of the revival:

- Large numbers of Arab Muslims are returning to a stricter practice of Islam.
- Islamic study groups and benevolent societies are forming with increasing frequency.
- Established political organizations—such as the Muslim Brotherhood—are becoming more assertive politically and are attracting new members. []

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Virtually all Arab governments are cognizant of the strong anties-establishment sentiment that drives the revival and are using both suppression and accommodation to attempt to manage it. Most regimes have been relatively successful in containing violence-prone groups. However, as regimes attempt to appease the much broader and less immediately dangerous populist pressures, their actions contribute to a gradual shift toward a more authentic Islamic culture. We believe this could be destabilizing for the following reasons:

- Complex social, economic, and political inequities will increasingly be viewed in a moral and religious context, less subject to political accommodation and compromise.
- The process of development and modernization could be slowed by efforts to accommodate Islamic sensibilities and demands for “de-Westernization” that may, in turn, exacerbate existing economic and social tensions.
- Imposing greater religious orthodoxy will offend and alarm non-Muslim communities, heterodox Islamic sects, and Westernized elites. []

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Islamic fundamentalists regard the United States as the foremost symbol of Western influences they perceive as responsible for stifling a more authentic Islamic society. American cultural dynamism, economic reach, and military capabilities are resented by many of those caught up in the revival. The enormous appeal and impact of American culture, US support of Israel, US actions against Lebanon and Libya, and the larger American presence in the region make the United States more threatening, dangerous, and a force more to be reckoned with than any other outside power, including the Soviet Union. However, the depth of anti-American feelings varies considerably from country to country. In part, the United States is attacked as a convenient symbol in order to influence Arab governments to adopt domestic policies perceived more in accord with Islam. []

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The Soviet Union is the target of the same xenophobic tendencies, is worried that the resurgence will spread among its Muslim minorities—some 45 million strong—and is not likely to be able to take serious advantage of anti-Western feelings. We are uncertain of the degree to which these concerns will complicate Soviet handling of the Islamic revival in the Middle East context. Soviet efforts thus far have been largely aimed at establishment Islam and are not likely to have much positive effect on popular attitudes. We have no evidence that the Soviets have tried to cultivate such groups as the Hizballah or Muslim Brotherhood. Yet, the Soviets must feel some ambivalence toward the Islamic resurgence since, at minimum, it is likely to sharply reduce Western presence and influence and could lead to greater opportunities for pro-Soviet elements should Islamic oriented regimes founder.

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The news is not altogether bad, however:

- Thus far, US friends in the region—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco—have been relatively successful in protecting relations with the United States even as they accommodate and try to dampen sentiment within the revival.
- The revival is less political, and less virulently anti-Western, among Sunni Muslims—the vast majority of Arabs. While the Islamic revolution in Shia Iran and the Khomeini regime's propaganda and covert activities have encouraged the revival's anti-US bent even among Sunnis, this influence over time may well abate following Khomeini's death.
- The Islamic revival is not a monolithic movement—it has no epicenter, is largely unorganized, and lacks leadership. Although this amorphous character is in some respects a hindrance to controlling the revival, it also provides opportunities for pre-empting and diminishing the potentially dangerous impulses of the phenomenon.
- The broad range of US diplomatic influence, and the potential to emphasize the incompatibilities between the Soviet Union and Islam can help redirect and lessen anti-US sentiment.

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Figure 1
Arab Nations of the Middle East and the Historic Heartland of Islam



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DISCUSSION

The Problem

1. The Islamic revival is a major political force in the contemporary world. It gained strength during the 1970s and influences some 900 million Muslims throughout the world. Some observers link it to a worldwide rise in religiosity and liken it to liberation theologies. Some emphasize the diversity of the revival and the different effects it has from North Africa through Europe and the Far East. Others stress the common features of its influence. Most agree, however, that the Islamic revival of the 1970s and 1980s is part of a long tradition of self-renewal within Islam and of a historical process of shaping uniquely Islamic but diverse societies in the modern world. []

2. Views concerning the impact of this revival in the Arab world divide roughly into optimistic and pessimistic schools. The former generally see resurgent Islam acting as a stabilizing agent holding society together in the face of enormous social and economic challenges, helping to pace change according to human tolerance, and preserving core values and traditions that give meaning to "Muslim society." The pessimistic view focuses on the reactionary and revolutionary impulses that often prevail over a more moderate application of Islamic thinking and the zealotry that makes compromise, flexibility, and adaptability dangerous offenses. []

3. The impact of the Islamic resurgence has been especially powerful in the Middle East—the birthplace of Islam—where Muslims constitute a vast majority of the populations of all but a few states, where the holy sites of Islam are located, and where the most prominent Islamic institutions and thinkers have given direction to the religion. Because Islam and Arab culture are so tightly entwined, religious identity is especially strong, often overrides national loyalty, and creates natural pathways for the spread of religious ideas and activism. Thus, the influence of the current revival has been pervasive in the Arab world. For most Muslims, the revival has been a spiritual and personal awakening. In its extremes, however, it has involved violence and terrorism, challenged the legitimacy of political leaders, and demanded total restructuring of the social and political order in accordance

with Islamic law. In less zealous expressions, the revival has affected social patterns, brought to the surface widespread economic and political unhappiness, and stimulated pressures for significant reforms. It has also focused negative feeling toward non-Muslims and foreign cultural, social, and political influences. []

4. The course of these sentiments has broad implications for the stability of individual Arab governments, for relationships with the outside world and, ultimately, for the development of Arab societies. It has significant regional and international implications. The influence of the Islamic revolution in Iran, the rise of the Hizballah in Lebanon, and less dramatic Islamic militancy elsewhere have reverberated throughout the Middle East, changing alliances and challenging a regional order that has existed for decades. Hostility toward outside interference, particularly toward the superpowers, has the potential to unsettle bilateral relationships established by the United States and the Soviet Union. Some aspects of strengthened Islamic sentiment are potentially harmful to foreign and minority communities. []

The Renewal and Spread of Islamic Sentiment of the Arab World

Islam is a faith and a ritual, a nation and a nationality, a religion and a state, spirit and deed, holy text and sword.

*Hasan al-Banna
Founder, Muslim Brotherhood*

5. Because Islam contains a complete program for ordering society and political life, and claims to be the final, true word of God, the impulse among adherents to cleanse society and return to Islam's principles is a recurrent phenomenon. Attempts at purification are as old as Islam itself. The Wahhabi movement, which began in the 1700s and was instrumental in creating the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, is the most durable expression of Islam's puritanical impulse in contemporary times. The perseverance of Wahhabism over nearly three centuries, and more recently, the vitality of the Muslim Brotherhood—an influential,

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highly political religious order founded in the 1920s—illustrates the persistence and power of reformist sentiment. The most recent wave of strong religious feeling is part of this perennial feature of Islam. ☐

6. For many Arabs, the turn to Islam is a reaction to disillusionment with their personal, national, and international positions, and the failure of various nationalist and socialist ideologies. The clash of tradition and modernization, deep ethnic and class divisions, defeats by Israel, the omnipresence of displaced Palestinians, and debilitating regional feuds have pushed some Muslims to blame outside influences and to seek solutions in the one tradition that unites the Arab majority—Islam. The signs of reinvigorated religious feelings are present in every Arab state and virtually every community:

- Mosques have proliferated in recent years and are now centers of much greater community activity than was common a generation ago.
- New formal and informal Islamic organizations have sprung up.
- Islamic studies are becoming common at all levels of education.
- Islamic legal codes are being debated and reintroduced.
- Islamic banks and financial institutions have found a niche as an alternative to the standard banking systems.
- Arabs of all social classes are returning in significant numbers to the basic practices of their faith. For most Arabs, heightened religious feeling has simply reshaped their individual behavior. A small but significant minority, however, has become politically active and views the growing popular enthusiasm for religious adherence as an opportunity for gaining mass support for political change. (See figure 8, foldout map, for sectarian distribution.) ☐

7. One of the most important features of the resurgence is that it is a populist phenomenon with leadership coming from the middle class. The revival has spread through the lower-middle classes, challenging ruling elites and their backers, and creating a sometimes stark division between the popular Islam of the disaffected and the establishment Islam of ruling families and governing elites. Traditional—less activist Islam—still prevails among lower classes who nonetheless represent a pool of potential recruits for Islamic activists. Most Arab governments are trying outwardly to manage heightened religious sentiment as if it were a positive, or at least neutral, development. In fact,

many regimes feel significantly threatened by the phenomenon. The essence of the threat is that popular Islam, although deeply divided in many ways, is fueled by ideas and forces from outside the political establishment and, despite differing visions, shares strong opposition to corrupt and oppressive government, foreign influences on society, and violations of Islam's delineation of social justice. ☐

8. The resurgence of Islamic feeling has stimulated political activism throughout the Arab world, but both the tactics and goals of religious reformers vary widely. Fundamentalists are among the most assertive in their beliefs, holding that Islam should govern all aspects of a Muslim's existence and that Islamic law—the *sharia*—should be the foundation of the state. In Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, fundamentalism is a tenet of state policy. Even among fundamentalists, sharp differences in attitude, tactics, and local conditions distinguish myriad groups. Some, like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan, have adopted evolutionary approaches to establishing Islamic government and have often sought legal status and a collaborative relationship with political leaders. Others, such as *Takfir wal Hijra* in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria (which has no legal options), and the Hizballah in Lebanon, use assassination, terrorism, and subversion in pursuit of revolutionary change. ☐

9. Although some fundamentalists want to roll back time and re-create the days when Islam was in its glory and the Arab world was its center, most fundamentalists do not consider themselves antimodern or antiprogressive. They do believe that modernization has been determined on Western secular terms and it—not Islam—must be redirected. Apart from the fundamentalists, other major groups (often referred to as adaptationists, reformists, and traditionalists) agree that the Islamic ethos is dangerously challenged in today's world but seek less radical changes than those of the fundamentalists with the objective of preserving the character of Islamic society. They usually emphasize bringing individual and social behavior back in line with the dictates of the Koran and requiring government to accommodate and encourage Islamic tradition and practice. ☐

10. Taken together, those calling for sudden, dramatic political change in the name of Islam remain a small minority in the Arab world. The majority of Arabs are conventional Muslims who, although deeply attached to Islam, seem to accept most secular features of government and the forms of modernity that shape daily life. However, all Arab Muslims are heavily influenced by Islam both as a spiritual and moral force and as a body of law and tradition. Consequently,

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Figure 2. Fundamentalist assassins of Sadat on trial.

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those who call for a return of true Islam—although a minority—serve as a kind of conscience for the community and are difficult to oppose without appearing anti-Islamic. Many have stature and sympathy among the majority and a potential to energize believers and win over adherents from what now appears to be a generally passive mainstream.

11. While radical reforms have limited appeal to most Arab Muslims, protests against economic deprivation and disparities, the abuses and exclusivity of power, and foreign interference strike responsive chords throughout Arab society. Religious activists have played a key role in expressing popular grievances in Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria and to a lesser—but significant—extent in wealthier oil-rich states and even in Morocco. Few may be dedicated to Islamic government as a solution, but many Arabs are sympathetic to the criticisms of society and government leveled by ardent religious reformers.

Common Causes

12. The seeming suddenness and violence with which Islamic sentiment asserted itself on the interna-

tional scene in the 1970s obscured its roots in Islamic history and its underlying causes, which in this current phase have been building for the past 50 years. The upsurge in religious feeling has had independent rhythms in individual Arab countries with wholly distinct local events bringing the revival to the fore: civil war in Lebanon, falling economic fortunes in Morocco, rule by the Alawite minority in Syria, and Sadat's peace and economic reform policies in Egypt. Nevertheless, most Arab nations have shared some experiences and conditions that appear to be related to the closer embrace of Islam:

- By the 1970s, many Arabs had begun to draw negative conclusions about the secular ideologies and institutions they had adopted at independence, which were now judged unable to deliver stability, military strength, social justice, and economic well-being.
- The ruling establishments, even in religiously conservative states, had become suspect in the eyes of many who regarded them as corrupt and un-Islamic in their personal behavior and far too dependent on one or the other superpower.

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Figure 3. Umayyad Mosque in Damascus built during apex of Islamic Empire.

- The explosive growth of Arab cities such as Cairo and Casablanca had created a frustrated urban population that turned to Islam as the most promising means of escape from their plight and a vehicle to combat the alienation that often accompanies urbanization.
 - The revival of Islamic and Arabic education following the end of colonial rule began to show effects by the 1970s, and along with the recovery of Islamic tradition came a fury over the denigration of Islam by Western colonialists and the perceived continuation of that contempt.
13. A number of specific events beginning in the late 1960s also helped to encourage Islamic zeal. Among the most important of these are:
- The calamity of the Arab defeat in the 1967 war—and particularly the loss of Jerusalem, one of Islam's holiest sites—created a climate favorable to a more Islamic orientation. The secular Pan-Arabism preached by Egypt and Syria emerged badly battered from the war, and the Arab losses were seen through the especially powerful belief in Islam that God punishes departure from faith and the sacred laws.
 - Muammar Qadhafi's coup in Libya in 1969. Although the Libyan leader has badly damaged his credibility and religious credentials in recent years, his initial allegiance to Islam and rejection of the West challenged the decades-old trend toward Western secularization and grabbed the attention of many Arabs.
 - Arab successes in the October 1973 war with Israel. In this conflict, Syria and Egypt intentionally adopted symbols of Islamic *jihad* (holy war) both to inspire their armies and to attract maxi-

mum international Muslim support. The war's enormous boost to Arab self-esteem thus became directly linked to Islam and the fruits of renewed faith.

- The rise in oil prices following the 1973 war. The accumulation of oil wealth by Arab Muslims reinforced the sense that a close embrace of Islam yields worldly benefits. Libya and Saudi Arabia have used their wealth to support Muslim causes, both conventional and militant.
- The fall of the Shah in 1979. The ouster of the Pahlavis was important to the Arab world because it demonstrated that a fully Westernized leader could be brought down by a religiously inspired mass movement. The export of Khomeini's religious militancy has inspired dissident Muslims throughout the Arab world, South Asia, and Europe, contributing to the sense of Islam "on the march."
- The invasion of Lebanon in 1982 by the Israelis followed by their subsequent retreat under fire. Israel's withdrawal from Arab territory in Lebanon and the US retreat are widely believed to have been forced by Islamic militants, and thus have heightened the belief that Islamic inspiration succeeds where conventional battle, secular politics, and diplomacy fail.

14. Arguments have been made that partial or complete derailment of the influences described above will significantly diminish the force of the revival. Qadhafi's discredited image, the Iran-Iraq war, the tyranny and bleak rewards of Iran's revolution, and the morass in Lebanon are cited as factors that will deflate Islamic zeal. Like other populist movements, the Islamic revival in the Arab world is subject to ebbs and flows, and these factors no doubt affect that tide. We believe, however, that the primary motivations for the reembrace of Islam are largely unaffected by such setbacks. The social and economic dislocations caused by modernization and the perception of moral decay brought on by Western influences are likely to couple with traditional devotion to Islam to perpetuate the revival.

Sectarian Differences

15. The Islamic revival in the Arab world is not a coordinated, unified movement. There is no religious or political epicenter. The vehemence of fundamentalist sentiment in Iran and Lebanon—where there are majority concentrations of Shia Muslims—has fostered the misimpression that Shias are driving the resurgence among all Muslims. Certain aspects of Shia

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Islam's Major Divisions

At the time of his death in 632 AD, Muhammad—the founding prophet of Islam—had established a new religion and a state in the Arabian peninsula that was in the process of becoming an empire. Muhammad could have no successor as prophet and there has never been any dispute that his revelations in the *Koran* were the final and perfect form of God's message to all men. Difference over temporal succession to Muhammad, however, arose immediately between those who supported Abu Bakr—one of the prophet's closest and ablest companions—who, indeed, took over leadership, and those who supported Ali ibn Abi Talib, Muhammad's son-in-law and kinsman. Tensions between these two groups reached a crisis when Muhammad's third successor, Uthman, was murdered in 656 AD and Ali assumed leadership. Uthman's family accused Ali of giving the assassins his protection and, in the ensuing civil war, Ali was killed. Uthman's family, the Umayyads established an Arab dynasty that ruled the now multinational Islamic state for the next century. []

Those opponents of the Umayyad dynasty who accepted Ali and his family as the lawful ruler were called the "Shi'a (party) of Ali." Their strength and numbers were centered initially in Iraq. Those Muslims who accepted the Umayyad dynasty and its successors became known as Sunnis, a word derived from the Arabic for "accepted practice." Numerous subjects and schools of interpretation have developed within these two basic divisions, but Sunnism has remained the dominant mainstream of the religion, and Shiism has endured as the most powerful, challenging alternative. []

There is also a crucial distinction between Sunni and Shia Islam in the role played by the clergy. Sunnis have no organized clerical hierarchy. It was Iran's structured Shia clerical establishment, reaching from the great holy cities into the villages, that facilitated Khomeini's revolution. []

Generalizations about differences in character and tendencies between these two primary branches of Islam are hazardous; both have puritanical impulses and histories of challenging secular rule. Shias, however, have generally felt greater tension in relationship to temporal authority and have periodically derived great political energy and cohesion from their deep emotional and spiritual commitment to Ali, whose life has come to

symbolize struggle against worldly tyrannies. Sunnis, on the other hand, have placed greater value on precedent and tradition and thus, in the main, have been more supportive of the status quo. []

More than 80 percent of all Muslims are Sunnis. Although Sunnis have religious scholars and clerics, they place greater stress on community consensus than on the pronouncements of religious elders. Sunnis are relatively tolerant of the various schools of interpretation of Islamic law that have developed within the sect over the centuries. []

Shias ascribe supernatural qualities to the descendants of Ali, and believe they are the rightful leaders of all Muslims. Shias—like Sunnis—have divided into numerous subjects; the Twelvers, who dominant in Iran, are the most numerous. There is less acceptance of one another among the various Shia subjects than among Sunni schools, and, although all Shias share the special relationship to Ali and have many traditions and practices in common, some groups that consider themselves Shia are regarded as heretical. The Alawites of Syria are one such subject that is shunned by the Shia mainstream. []

The fundamental difference between Shias and Sunnis over succession and the significance of Ali has contemporary as well as great historical importance. Ayatollah Khomeini's rationale for clerical rule in Iran is that it is best suited to hold leadership in trust until the mystical, rightful heir of Ali returns. No such rationale could emerge from Sunni doctrine nor are Sunnis susceptible to conversion to Shiism. The revival within the two sects is thus on parallel but distinctly separate doctrinal courses. Although the structure and particularities of Shia Islamic government have no grounding in Sunni beliefs, the notion of able leadership that combines spiritual integrity and temporal authority is powerful among Sunni fundamentalists and probably appealing to religiously conscious Sunnis generally. Although Sunnism may lack the passion for its adherents that Shiism has and does not seem to offer up the potential for the radicalism of the Iran model, its doctrine is equally demanding in terms of purity and righteousness and its greater flexibility on the issue of leadership certainly does not preclude a drive for major social and political change. []

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doctrine are important factors in the vitality of fundamentalist activity in Iran and in the Shia communities in Lebanon and the Gulf states, but social, political, and economic conditions have been more important than doctrines of the Shia faith. Moreover, fundamentalist efforts in predominantly Shia Iraq have had relatively little success. By contrast, the spiritual revival has strong appeal in such Sunni Muslim countries as Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, and Syria. Sunnis have traditionally used Islam as a political force more often and more effectively than Shias, and many of the spiritual and intellectual fathers of this contemporary revival are Sunni figures. Although the revival seems a tamer phenomenon among Sunnis than among Shia, we believe Sunni reformers may have the potential for instigating instability and deep structural changes in Arab societies. []

16. The feeling among Shias that they are an oppressed minority in the Muslim world is one reason they have been quicker to turn religious zeal into political action:

- Shia resentment of centuries of Sunni domination is the basic cause of religious agitation among Shias in the Sunni-dominated countries of the Arabian Peninsula.
- It is an important motivation behind Iran's efforts to subvert Sunni leaders of neighboring countries.
- It is a reason Shia militants in Lebanon have not yet fully joined forces with their Sunni Muslim compatriots.

Although individual Sunni and Shia activists are sometimes supportive of each other and gain inspiration from one another's successes, the ancient antagonisms between the two sects continue to set them against one another on a broad scale. Only when members of both sects are preoccupied with challenging their secular, non-Islamic foes is their mutual antipathy likely to remain a somewhat peripheral issue. []

17. Wherever they are in the Arab world, Shia activists are likely to look to Iran for guidance and support, at least as long as Ayatollah Khomeini is alive. Under his leadership, Iran has vigorously supported Shia militants and other dissident Muslims throughout the world with recruitment and training programs, direct funding, and the establishment and infiltration of cultural centers and student associations. We doubt that these efforts will meet with the same success after Khomeini dies, however. The new sense of cohesion among Shia will probably diminish, although the appeal of fundamentalism will doubtless remain strong

within that sect. The strength and inclinations of Khomeini's successors and the revolutionary institutions he leaves behind will largely determine Iran's ability to spread its revolutionary fundamentalism further afield. Any successor to Khomeini is not likely to abandon the instrument of Shiism or Islamic zeal as a tool of domestic and foreign policy, particularly as a means to gain influence among its immediate Arab neighbors. The excesses of the Khomeini regime, traditional Arab antipathy for Persians, and Sunni distaste of Shia doctrine and mysticism, and its acceptance of clerical rule will continue under any circumstances to place significant limits on Tehran's appeal to most Arab Muslims. []

18. We can see no monolithic quality to this revival as yet. For Sunnis—and most Arab Muslims are Sunni—no single individual, institution, or country has a dominant impact on religious sentiment or activism. Some well-established groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood—with chapters in virtually every Arab country for decades—have provided doctrinal and organizational continuity between fundamentalists of an earlier era and activists of today. The Brotherhood is also a wealthy organization composed in most countries of prominent businessmen and professionals, who have funded younger members and provided material support to other conservative groups. Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the oil-rich Gulf states provide funds to various Islamic groups—both militant and conventional—and, in some instances, prayer leaders and community reformers have gained local followings. It is possible, however, that an individual like Egypt's Nasir, with charisma and political savvy, who promotes a religious rather than secular ideology, might arise to give Sunni Muslims the inspiration that Khomeini gives many Shia. []

The Dynamics of the Revival in Arab Politics

Islam has always been there as a powerful force behind political upheavals in the Muslim world... Only an otherwise unwatchful world sees this an awakening of a dormant force.

*Hamid Enayat
Islamic Scholar*

Differences and Similarities

19. The Islamic resurgence has a unique character in each Arab country, making generalizations hazardous:

- In Jordan, fundamentalists are found throughout government, parliament, and the universities, and have become more active, despite recent government crackdowns.

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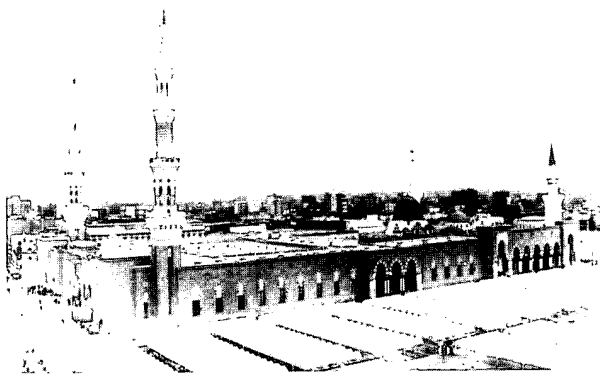


Figure 4. The Grand Mosque in Mecca and the spiritual center of Islam. Seized by fundamentalists in 1979. ☐

- In Saudi Arabia, where fundamentalism is a key tenet of the state, religious activism is fueled by growing popular criticism of corruption within the royal family and its failure to adhere to strict Islamic values. Religious activism within the country's Shia minority is a localized problem but is a potential threat to order in the eastern oil-rich Eastern Province.
 - In Morocco, King Hassan is the preeminent religious leader, but he rules through secular institutions that afford little outlet for popular grievances that are coalescing within popular Islam.
 - In the smaller Gulf states, religious activism arises from Shia disaffection, disillusioned students, and long-established conservative Sunni Islamic groups responding to rapid change and turmoil in the region. ☐
20. In secular-oriented countries, the picture is equally varied:
- Where central authority is strong and repressive—Syria and Algeria—religious activists have been forced underground or into exile and are generally radical but fragmented. Open expression of strong religious sentiment is clearly dangerous, and the inclinations of the general population are thus difficult to gauge.
 - In Tunisia and Egypt, where some freedom of expression is permitted, religious activism runs the gamut from militant, clandestine organizations to groups that operate openly within the system.
 - In Iraq's mixed Shia/Sunni population, stern repression, coupled with strong nationalist sentiment, successful modernization efforts, and gov-

ernment attempts to balance the interests of Shia and Sunnis, has kept the revival weak, despite Iran's efforts to encourage it.

- In Oman and North and South Yemen, where development and social change have been slow and traditional Islam is strong, there has been much less religious agitation than elsewhere in the Arab world.
- Lebanon and the West Bank are wholly exceptional (see paragraphs 27 to 29 below). ☐

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21. Despite these differences, heightened religious feelings are expressed in similar ways in many parts of the Arab world, ranging from unorganized believers in the general population to small, tightly organized groups of fanatics and revolutionaries:

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- Within the general population, increased Islamic feelings are manifest through high mosque attendance and a closer observance of Islamic rules and dress. Although usually politically passive, those caught up in the revival—thought to number in the tens of thousands in Morocco and Tunisia and many more in Egypt—have played a significant role in mass demonstrations and disorders, generally protesting over economic hardships.
- A proliferation over the past decade of *sufi* orders (the Islamic form of mysticism), benevolent societies, and private Islamic study groups—found, for example, in Arab universities and militaries—has heightened Islamic awareness. Although most of these groups are not politically oriented at this point, many are probably sympathetic to their more active coreligionists.
- Well-established organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhoods in Egypt and Jordan and the Islamic Tendency Movement in Tunisia are distinctly fundamentalist and political. They press for reforms, generally targeting social and legal issues, but usually steer away from direct confrontation, or even work with the government. They are often wealthy and provide financial support to younger activists. Many of today's radical groups are offshoots of these older organizations.
- The rise of young, well-educated fundamentalists and popular Islamic prayer leaders or preachers is one of the most distinctive features of the revival. They too are pressing for reforms, but with greater urgency and a more confrontational attitude than the older, established groups. Well-

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educated students in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and North Africa—including many who have studied in the West—are turning to politicized Islam in significant numbers.

- At the fringe are radicals committed to the violent overthrow of the established order. Though very few in number, their impact on the Arab world is disproportionately powerful by virtue of their uncompromising vision of the ideal Islamic society and their resistance to intimidation, co-option, and diversion.

22. Taken together, these manifestations of heightened Islamic sentiment do not constitute a movement, but rather reflect a mood of unhappiness, a desire for change in the direction of a more “authentic” Islamic culture, and a disillusionment with established authority. Virtually every Arab government views the Islamic revival with at least some trepidation and is using a combination of appeasement and coercion to manage the challenge. Although radical groups pose immediate security problems and are the focus of much of the energies of Arab regimes, we believe the larger body of those swept up in the revival represents the most serious long-range challenge to the direction—and even the stability—of Arab governments and society. Because of its amorphous character and lack of central leadership and common objectives, we believe even the most adept Arab leaders will have difficulty channeling the impulses of the revival and monitoring the attitudes and activities of such a wide swath of Arab society.

Government Responses

23. Arab officials have been fairly successful at identifying, monitoring, and containing organized extremists. The record is mixed, however, on the effectiveness of outright suppression. Egyptian President Sadat, for example, was assassinated by Islamic extremists shortly after he ordered a crackdown. In Syria, President Assad—after unsuccessfully using a carrot and stick approach for years—virtually annihilated the Muslim Brotherhood in 1982. While surviving members still work against him, Assad essentially eliminated any immediate danger to his regime in one draconian showdown. The risk in harsh security measures is that they tend to inspire fanatics, and they have an uncertain impact on the wider Muslim community, which—in line with Muslim tradition—opposes harsh punishment for any Muslim acting on strong religious conviction.

24. Virtually all Arab governments are engaging in some degree of accommodation of religious demands. Most Arab leaders have increased their public displays

of devotion in an effort to enhance their legitimacy. Even secular leaders, such as Iraq's Saddam Husayn and Syrian President Assad, are trying to associate themselves more closely with religious practices and the symbols of Islam. Almost all Arab regimes are enforcing adherence to the restrictions of Ramadan (the Muslim month of fasting), are using government-controlled media to purvey an image of Islamic devotion, and are devoting more resources to religious affairs ministries and mosques.

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25. On the far more contentious issue of implementing Islamic law or the *sharia*, a primary objective of fundamentalists, most governments are proceeding cautiously and with considerable reluctance. The Mubarak government, for example, has tried to sidetrack fundamentalist demands for implementation of the *sharia* by embarking on a drawn-out process of examining every Egyptian law for adherence to the letter and spirit of the *sharia*. Other governments that inherited legal codes from colonial powers are attempting to confine the application of *sharia* to personal and family matters, such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. They particularly want to avoid the controversy that inevitably arises over *sharia* punishments in criminal law such as stoning, amputation, and decapitation. Only Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Libya, and Bahrain have incorporated these aspects of *sharia* in their legal systems.

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26. Because application of the *sharia* is a central goal of fundamentalists and the chief expression of their faith, the tentative moves most Arab governments have taken have satisfied only the most moderate reformers. At the same time, even relatively modest accommodations of Islamic law have alarmed religious minorities, non-Muslim foreign communities and those in the middle and upper classes who are committed to secularism.

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Exceptional Cases: Lebanon and the West Bank

27. Two decades of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and more than a decade of civil strife in Lebanon have created circumstances especially conducive to the rise of Islamic activism. Although both areas have experienced the same socioeconomic difficulties that have fueled Muslim sentiment elsewhere in the Arab world, the struggle by Muslims against non-Muslims is an important impetus for Islamic militancy in these unique parts of the Arab world. Indeed, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967 and Christian and Israeli collaboration against Muslims in Lebanon since the mid-1970s and the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon reverberated in surrounding Arab countries and were contributing causes of the

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Figure 5. The attack of President Sadat by fundamentalists in the Egyptian military. [redacted]

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revival regionwide. The emergence of several generations of deeply alienated, violence-prone Palestinians and Lebanese Muslims ensures that these radicalizing tendencies will continue and probably broaden. [redacted]

28. [redacted]

[redacted] fundamentalism is making slow but steady progress throughout Palestinian society on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, attracting about 15 percent of the Muslim population. Its greatest impact has been among young Palestinians in universities and secondary schools. Dissatisfaction with secular politics and increased restrictions on political activity under hard-line Israeli leadership have caused West Bankers and, even more so, Gazans to turn in increasing numbers to violence and Islamic activism. Ironically, Israeli officials and Palestinian secular leaders are trying in the struggle against one another to manipulate Islamic activism for their individual purposes, and neither side seems concerned, at this point, that such machinations might spawn activity that will be difficult to control. [redacted]

29. In war-torn Lebanon, fundamentalists have become major competitors in the struggle for control of the country. The Shia Hizballah movement is dedicat-

ed to the establishment of an Islamic republic on the model of Iran. The much smaller Islamic Unity Movement, located in northern Lebanon, also believes in Islamic government but one in line with Sunni doctrine. Revolutionary Iran continues to be the primary benefactor of Hizballah—providing up to \$100 million annually—and has encouraged its surrogate in a campaign against the United States, Israel, and Western interests generally. The Lebanese central government is incapable of controlling Hizballah or any other fundamentalists group, which are limited in their actions only by competition from other warring parties—including Syria and Israel—and the deeply fractured nature of society itself. Conditions in Lebanon are such that no fundamentalist group is likely to gain the necessary strength or territorial control in the next several years to establish uncontested hegemony in a significant portion of the country. However, we expect fundamentalist groups to fare well in the competition for new recruits and adherents. [redacted]

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The Islamic Revival and the Outside World

Everything around is anti-Islamic barbarousness; perceptions and beliefs, manners and morals, culture,

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Figure 6. The wreckage of US Marine barracks in Beirut following car bombing.

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art and literature, laws and regulations, including a good part of what we consider Islamic culture.

Sayyid Qutb
Noted Fundamentalist Writer

30. Concern over foreign influences on Arab society and politics is a major theme of the Islamic revival. Many who wish to reinvigorate Islamic society accept at least some foreign innovations in daily life, but wish to recapture more authentic Muslim values and practices. They see evolutionary change toward greater Muslim authenticity as the solution to the erosion of Islamic culture. In contrast, fundamentalists, in general, are more openly hostile to foreign encroachment, are more global in their perspective, and are more political in their attacks. They, like most Arabs, condemn the prevailing international order, often in rhetoric very similar to Third World and militant nonaligned movements. They argue that the superpowers and their allies exploit the Muslim world and have made Arab countries economically and politically dependent. At the extreme, they believe that this system is perpetuated by the intermediation of corrupted Arab rulers and elites who must be eliminated

before a truly Islamic power can present an alternative.

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31. From this perspective, fundamentalists take on both superpowers. The United States, as the principal Western power and perceived successor to past British and French colonial rulers, has effectively become the primary target of anti-Western sentiment.

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32. The enormous appeal and impact of American culture to many Arabs, US support of Israel, US actions against Muslims in Lebanon and Libya, and the larger American presence in the region make it a more serious challenger than the Soviet Union in the eyes of a Muslim activist. We believe these feelings will create challenges for the United States and friendly Arab governments in managing the political impact of the Islamic revival, protecting against militant and terrorist activity, and preserving a range of bilateral cultural, economic, and social relations. For its part, the Soviet Union is excoriated for atheism, suppression of its Muslim minority, and—more recently—for its invasion of Afghanistan, where Islamic militants represent the principal military challenge to Soviet domination. Although the Soviet Union will also have

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difficulty managing its interests, Moscow is less vulnerable in view of its much smaller presence in the region, and is likely to have some opportunities to capitalize on the greater disadvantage of the United States. []

The American Dilemma

33. Wary Muslims see similarities in American and Soviet culture: scientific methodology and the belief in progress pervade both, customs in such sensitive areas as the relationship between the sexes are seen as similar and Muslims sense that Americans and Soviets are equally convinced of the primacy of Western civilization. However, the dreary state culture of the Soviet Union has had virtually no impact on the Arab world. Even Marxism and atheism—both anathema to strong Muslim believers—have gained followings among Arabs via the West; the versions purveyed by the Soviets are generally considered hidebound and lacking intellectual honesty. The United States, on the other hand, has enormous cultural influence, and thus is closely associated with—or even held largely responsible for—the perceived erosion of religious values, the encroachment of secularism, and the promotion of modernizing models that are viewed as dehumanizing, valueless, and excessively materialistic. []

34. American literature, textbooks, products, movies, and advertising are found throughout the Arab world, even though much of this material is offensive even to many moderate Muslims. To religious reformers, the list of American cultural “offenses” is almost endless, but several are particularly onerous. American schools, particularly those in the Arab world such as the American University of Beirut, are regarded by some fundamentalists as among the most objectionable aspects of US cultural allure, in that they infect young Muslims with alien ideas at an early age. Also of concern is the Christian heritage of many of these schools and their role in what is regarded as the continuing export of Christianity from America. Christian missionaries and clergy are, for fundamentalists, a direct threat to Islam. Many fundamentalists see lingering anti-Muslim sentiment in Christianity, believe that these feelings are a strong component in US policies, and are increasingly using the symbols of ancient Christian-Muslim rivalry and hatred—specifically the crusades—in their criticism of the United States. The recently deceased leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, considered to be a moderate and pragmatic voice within the Brotherhood, articulated this concern most concisely: “US attitudes are motivated by several factors, but the most important, in my view, is religious fanaticism. . . . This attitude is a continuation of the crusader invasion of 1,000

years ago.” That American clergy and academics have not been immune from Muslim terrorism in Lebanon is not surprising. []

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35. We believe these religious and cultural sensitivities can fan anti-American sentiment, particularly among middle-class, educated youth. Some people believe that there is an anti-Christian bias articulated by fundamentalists that may find greater receptivity at a time when the history of Islam is receiving much wider attention. Some young people educated in the West have turned to Islam apparently because of the cultural disorientation they experience while away from home and because reembracing their faith is the quickest way to regain their intellectual and emotional moorings. Many returning students describe their experience in America as a psychological onslaught rather than a stimulating, growth experience. []

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36. The US relationship with Israel is perceived by many Arabs, not just those caught up in the revival, as one of total and uncritical support of Israel against the Arabs and, by extension, Islam. Israel's invasion of Lebanon, its attacks on Iraq and Tunisia, its actions against Palestinians, and its refusal to give up the occupied territories are viewed as American supported on the grounds that the United States has done nothing to stop such actions and has often supplied the military equipment to execute them. The US-Israeli agreement on strategic cooperation is viewed as evidence of unqualified US backing of Tel Aviv. On the issue of US support of Israel, the views of fundamentalists and most other Arabs are the same, thus giving impassioned Muslims a powerful theme that will encourage anti-American feelings from what would otherwise be inattentive audience. []

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37. Moreover, the conflict with Israel has increasingly been viewed as a religious struggle. Israel's control of Muslim holy sites in east Jerusalem, Israel's vigorous settlement effort in occupied territories, and the rise of militant Jewish activism are much more serious complicating factors in the peace effort and in US-Arab relations, when viewed as religious rather than secular political issues. Fundamentalists and others have capitalized on these emotional themes at the expense of US and moderate Arab leaders. []

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38. Only the most extreme fundamentalists hold such sweeping negative views of the United States. Common bonds and interests mitigate in varying degrees these perceptions of America. Where US economic aid has promoted development and improved the quality of life, considerable good will toward the United States exists. US security assistance is certainly welcomed by many Arab governments and, although suspect in some segments of the popula-

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tion, is appreciated by those who share a distrust of Moscow and its proxies. A common belief in one God creates a special rapport with many Americans and interfaith discourse has had some success in promoting mutual understanding among individuals and clergy. However, these positive forces have clearly not been sufficient to prevent an anti-US current in the Islamic revival. []

Soviet Liabilities

39. Moscow cannot take much comfort in America's negative image among many Islamic revivalists. It is often condemned in the same manner as the United States, and, in countries such as Syria where it has a large presence, Soviets are the targets of fundamentalist repudiation and terrorism. Over a dozen Soviet advisers were killed by the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria between 1980 and 1981, and four Soviet diplomats were kidnaped and one killed in Beirut in 1985. []

40. Moreover, since the late 1970s, Moscow has become increasingly apprehensive about the spread of the Islamic revival from the Middle East into Central Asia and Azerbaijan, where approximately 45 million Soviet Muslims live. [] during the final years of the Brezhnev regime, the Kremlin perceived Islam as a growing threat to its southern frontier. A recent intensification of antireligious campaigns in the Caucasian republics—reflected in party speeches and the media—is shaping into a move against Islam similar to the anti-Christian campaign during the Khrushchev era. Riots in Alma Ata in late 1986 following the appointment of a Russian as party leader in Kazakhstan have probably heightened Moscow's concern about nationalism and the degree to which it is bolstered by Islam. []

41. We are uncertain of the degree to which these concerns will complicate Soviet handling of the Islamic revival in the Middle East context. Moscow will probably continue to use cooperative diplomats, academics, and clerics from its Muslim minority to woo Arab Muslims. The Soviets will probably continue a series of Islamic conferences intended to convince foreign Muslims that their Soviet coreligionists are free to pursue Islam and to project the notion that Soviet interests are compatible with the Islamic community. The 1986 Baku conference boasted representation from 60 countries and was by far the most successful of the seven such conferences Moscow has organized. []

42. These efforts are largely aimed at establishment Islam, however, and are not likely to have much

positive affect on popular attitudes. We have no evidence that the Soviets have tried to cultivate such groups as the Hizballah or Muslim Brotherhood, despite their anti-Western agendas, nor, to our knowledge, have such groups sought Soviet support. Initially, Soviet theoreticians and academics were cautiously optimistic about opportunities to use the Islamic revival against the United States, but they have grown progressively pessimistic in their evaluation of the extent to which Islamic sentiments can serve Soviet interests. We believe this pessimism reflects Moscow's concern about its internal Muslim problem and a more realistic appraisal of the powerful antiforeign bias of the revival. However, Moscow will attempt to take advantage of the phenomenon and encourage anti-US action and rhetoric when and where its hand in such dealings can be masked or simply when Soviet and Islamic interests coincide, such as in Moscow's current dealings with Iran. []

Prospects for the Revival

43. We anticipate that the Islamic revival will remain a significant political force into the 1990s and probably beyond. Issues involving Islamic law and social practice are becoming a major component of the domestic political debate in most Arab states. Although there may in time be disenchantment with more extreme fundamentalist solutions, this will not necessarily lessen a heightened sense among many Arabs that greater respect for Islam in society and government and in relations with the outside world is necessary, nor will it soften criticism of current leaders, political institutions, or the Western forms of culture that predominate. []

44. The most likely impact of the Islamic revival into the next decade will be a shift toward an authentic Islamic culture where Muslim practices and traditions have much more influence in social and political life. This evolution could be politically destabilizing. Without corresponding economic reform in favor of the disadvantaged—which is envisaged by Muslim revivalists—disparities in wealth and living standards may be cast increasingly in a moral context that could erode the passive acceptance that has generally characterized the Arab underclass. Although more moderate religious reformers may be mollified by small changes, determined activists will probably agitate for even greater change. Imposing greater religious orthodoxy will offend and alarm non-Muslim communities, heterodox Islamic sects, and Westernized elites. Some or all of these problems are likely to develop or have already emerged in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Morocco, and Jordan. []

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Tunisia

Developments in Tunisia may provide signposts in charting the path of the revival. Tunisia suffers all the ills that have generated the revival in other Arab countries—disparities in wealth and living conditions, joblessness, and a burgeoning population disillusioned and worried about the future. Strong Western influence on society, government, and leadership, the determined secularization of the country under President Bourguiba, and worsening economic and social problems have spawned a vigorous revival with a strong fundamentalist component. At the end of the Bourguiba era, the issue of the country's direction under new leadership is likely to put the strength and direction of the revival there in bold relief.

45. Efforts by Arab governments to accommodate religious demands and attempts by individual leaders to project a more Islamic image will contribute significantly to the shift toward a more conservative Islamic way of life in the Arab Middle East. While radical groups will be largely contained by increased official vigilance, more moderate forces at work in the revival are likely to be appeased rather than suppressed and will attract more followers. We expect that many Western cultural “offenses”—movies, advertising, television programming, and the like—will be increasingly restricted. Of greater consequence, birth control programs, some Western educational practices, and interest banking will come under increasing fire.

46. We believe the chances are remote that any existing government will be overthrown in the next two years by forces like those that ousted the Shah. Lessons learned from the Iran experience, greater government vigilance, and official attention to the concerns of fundamentalists and others will diminish the possibility of forces coalescing around an effective revolutionary leadership—as they did in Iran. Within this timeframe, however, the destabilizing influences of the Islamic revival may weaken especially vulnerable regimes and contribute to or act as a catalyst for more broadly based political turmoil. Moreover, some extremist Islamic groups and lone fanatics are bound to go unnoticed and will pose dangers to the safety of individual Arab leaders.

47. In addition to seemingly intractable socioeconomic problems that will continue to motivate the resurgence, we believe a number of developments

could take place over the next several years that would increase religious agitation. These include:

- Major conflict between Israeli and Arab forces.
- The desecration of Muslim holy places in the West Bank by Jewish extremists.
- A dramatic drop in oil prices that substantially affects the resources available in oil-rich states and among the recipients of their assistance.
- A clear-cut Iranian victory in the Iran-Iraq war.

48. Other events and developments could significantly slow the growth of the Islamic revival:

- A broad upturn in the Arab economies sparked—most probably—by significant increases in oil revenues.
- Substantial progress in solving the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- The collapse of the Islamic revolutionary regime in Iran.
- Missteps by Islamic fanatics, triggering a backlash by moderate and/or secular elements.

Regional Impact

49. Over time, political pressure generated by the Islamic resurgence will tend to push Arab countries toward a more nonaligned posture and toward attempts to reduce conflicts among Arab Muslims. Islam's central tenet that Muslims are one community that transcends all other loyalties is a recurrent theme in the revival. We doubt that the feuding and distrust will desist, but the revival will create more incentives for Arab countries—especially weak ones—to improve their Islamic credentials. In international forums such as the United Nations, the Nonaligned Movement, and the Islamic Conference, Arab leaders are likely to formulate their positions with much greater sensitivity to the host of issues that have arisen from strong Islamic sentiment.

Longer Term Effects on Development and Stability

50. There exists a broad spectrum of views among analysts on the longer term meaning of the revival. The alternative scenarios presented here are to be considered archetypical examples characterizing the more optimistic and pessimistic views of the revival.

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The Optimistic View

51. Under this view, Islam will act not as a disrupting agent but as a stabilizing factor within Arab societies: a glue holding the culture together in the face of enormous social and economic challenges. There has long existed a dynamic tension in Arab societies between the need for development and the desire to preserve society's core values. Arab leaders and populations have a strong, almost desperate desire to restore Arab and Islamic culture to a stronger position relative to the rest of the world in science and technology, military power, and cultural contributions. In addition, there has been a deeply rooted backlash against the assault on traditional values and customs wrought by foreign influence and rapid change. []

52. Islam has, in various historical periods, served as a progressive force in society, and optimists assert that Islam will be the most effective means for rationalizing the "modernization/traditions" dilemma. Using Islamic legitimacy and its mobilizing potential could provide Arab governments a tool for reshaping modernization, making the pursuit of development and positive change not only less threatening, but an Islamic duty. In addition, even if radical fundamentalists were to take over in any given country, they would have to take pragmatic considerations into account. In the abstract, their ideas might appear inflexible and even regressive; in an actual working situation, at least some compromises would have to be made. []

53. Though all analogies between countries in the Middle East ultimately founder on the particularities of the individual states, a comparison of the recent histories of Iran and Saudi Arabia illustrates the optimists' point. In Iran, the Shah perceived Islam as a restraining factor in his plans to pull the country forward. He gave Islamic institutions little means for affecting the direction, pace, and nature of change. In Saudi Arabia, the royal family has stuck to an explicit policy of defending Islamic custom. While pursuing selective modernization, the Kingdom's survival of the dramatic change and shocks of the last decade and a half (first, in absorbing previously unimaginable oil revenues and then riding the revenue curve back down again) was aided by the stabilizing influence of Islam. []

The Pessimists' View

54. The pessimists do not argue that Islam is necessarily regressive, but they see the current revival as driven by reactionary impulses. This colors the application of Islamic tradition in such a way that, the pessimists argue, the revival itself must be seen as

Economics and the Islamic Revival

The oil boom of the 1970s and the rapid modernization that it fueled in the Arab world were clearly contributing causes of the Islamic revival. The rapid social and cultural changes that accompanied the era of prosperity were profoundly disorienting to many Arab Muslims, who sought continuity and refuge in Islam. Greater educational opportunities, exposure to foreign cultures and ideas through the mass media, and the comingling in large numbers of conservative migrants from rural areas with thoroughly Westernized, secular-oriented city dwellers created conditions for the rapid growth of powerful religious sentiment. []

The changing oil market in this decade and the recession that many states in the region are experiencing have not appreciably slowed the expansion of the Islamic revival, however. Policies by most Arab governments to slow modernization—for both practical economic and political reasons—have not reduced the tensions that seem to give rise to religious agitation. We believe this is because rapid change spurred by the oil boom—while an important factor in the revival—was only one of many causes of the turn to Islam. Paradoxically, the economic downturn has affected attitudes in ways that may even be fueling the religious resurgence:

- Expectations for education, employment, housing, and a better life generally have been dashed for many young Arabs whose frustration is being vented through political Islam.
- Disparities in economic, social, and political power were brought to the fore during the economic boom and now seem more entrenched to those who have little hope of improving their lot through the conventional means of better education and jobs.
- The decline in wealth is evidence for some of God's punishment for departure from strict faith.
- The complexities of daily life in a world that lingers between modern and traditional practices and beliefs have created a yearning for the simplicity that Islam preaches.
- The inconsistencies and abrupt changes in government policies have fed the suspicions of many that current Arab leaders are corrupt, incompetent, and lack any clear vision of where they are leading their countries. []

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reactionary and a major impediment to modernization. In this view, the more "Islamic" that societies become, the less able they will be to address problems pragmatically. The horrifying costs borne by both sides in the Iran-Iraq war is an extreme example of the potential to remove any possibility of reasonable compromise by transforming territorial or political disputes into Holy War. []

55. []

Arab countries, especially those without huge oil reserves, can improve their economic well-being only by increasing human productivity to competitive levels. In an increasingly integrated and competitive international economy the practical application of many of the principles of the Islamic revival is likely to impede development in the Arab world:

- Strict observance of certain religious duties—prayers and long fasting—will divert time from productive economic pursuits.
- Separation of the sexes in the workplace will add to the marginal costs of production in economic enterprises.
- Constraints on the education and employment of women will deprive the Arab economies of a significant potential pool of productive talent.
- The concept of "revealed truth:" in Islamic theology will reinforce existing autocratic tendencies in the Arab world, probably making social and economic organization more rigid, less adaptable to changing conditions, and less willing to accept new ideas.
- Conformity will tend to be prized over innovation.
- Fatalism—a practical though not necessary feature of Islamic society—will tend to continue to stifle initiative and personal responsibility.
- Islamic inheritance laws would divide land into progressively smaller—and less efficient—parcels.
- "Morals" laws would inhibit foreign tourism and investment.
- Islamic governments would be most unlikely to implement any sort of programs for limiting population growth.

A competitive environment—in which only a tiny advantage can spell the difference between success and failure—will probably leave economies heavily influenced by the Islamic revival increasingly behind

many other developing economies in the Third World. On the more positive side, however, the inefficiencies of an "Islamic" economy could well be less of a drain on some Arab economies than the "Arab socialist" measures of the past in countries such as Syria, Algeria, and Libya. []

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Implications for the United States

56. The United States has had a mixed experience with strongly Islamic states. In Libya under the Sanussi leader, King Idris, and in Saudi Arabia where fundamentalist Islam is the foundation of the state, generally constructive, close relations and protection and advancement of US interests have been possible. US experience with revolutionary Iran suggests that, whenever a regime closely associated with—or perceived to have been supported by—the United States is replaced by Islamic Revolutionary forces, prospects for effective dialogue or even pursuit of parallel interests are poor. We do not foresee such dire circumstances arising in the next several years, but Islam's strong hold on Arab Muslims, the gradually expanding scope of this revival, the volatility of regional politics, and the factors for instability in many Arab countries make the more distant future much less certain. []

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57. The immediate challenge for the United States will be to help adjust, along with friendly Arab states, to the changes that the Islamic resurgence will produce for as long as it remains a dynamic force. In virtually every Arab country where the United States has significant policy and security interests—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the Persian Gulf States, Morocco, and Tunisia—the Islamic resurgence is either strong or affecting areas of internal vulnerability. Even in those countries where US interests are less significant or bilateral relations are adversarial—Algeria, Iraq, Syria—the course of Islamic activism will have—at minimum—an indirect impact on US interests. []

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58. There are serious limits on the influence the United States can bring to bear directly on the problems it is likely to face. Hostility toward the United States from Islamic quarters has as much to do with American cultural dynamism, economic reach, and military capabilities as with specific US actions. What America is, as well as what it does, sometimes offends and challenges fundamentalists. For this reason, the United States can do almost nothing directly to satisfy radical fundamentalists. []

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59. Thus far, US friends in the region—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan—have been reasonably successful in accommodating some fundamentalist demands without significant damage to policies important to the United States. We expect that, under most circumstances, they will continue to balance fairly well these internal pressures on the one hand and to protect relations with the United States on the other. Nonetheless, these leaders may have to accommodate a steady “de-Westernization” of daily life and increased manifestations of anti-US sentiment, and show a greater reserve in the conduct of public aspects of bilateral relations—all a price for maintaining that balance. []

60. Harassment of—in some cases even physical danger toward—US citizens and officials is likely to increase in those countries where radical fundamentalism is strongest. Even though the security services of most Arab countries are devoting significant energy to controlling religious agitation, extremist organizations often have cellular structures that are difficult to penetrate or even monitor, and random acts by lone fanatics are virtually impossible to preempt. Experience to date suggests that the risks for Americans are higher in those areas where there are significant concentrations of Shia Muslims—Lebanon and the Persian Gulf states. Although both Sunni and Shia fundamentalist groups hold anti-American attitudes, Shias have more often engaged in direct attacks on US personnel and installations. Apart from occasional mob violence, attacks by Sunnis on US citizens have been rare, although this may not always be so. []

61. Bilateral relations could also be complicated by increasingly severe punishments imposed on US citizens living in Arab countries as more and more states give greater place to Islamic law. Special exceptions for private US citizens and leniency arranged through diplomatic efforts are disappearing practices []

US Government intervention on behalf of its citizens will also become more difficult and risk laden. Criminal offenses in *sharia* law encompass a broad range of behavior—much of which could be considered totally acceptable in the United States. Rules of evidence can be discriminatory and unfair, and some punishments would be considered barbarous by American standards. While the potential for serious, regular friction between the United States and an Arab government on such issues is not great, one controversial case—involving an American diplomat, for example—could galvanize popular outrage on either side and give

provocative ammunition to those Muslims looking for evidence of American trespasses. []

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62. The special relationship between the United States and Israel will continue to be a major source of friction with even the most moderate Muslims. US actions and policies on such sensitive issues as the status of Jerusalem, control of the Islamic holy sites, and Israeli settlement policy are potential flashpoints for explosive anti-US feelings. []

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63. We do not believe that religious sentiment is having a major effect on the militaries in any of the Arab countries currently receiving US military assistance. []

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[] The extent of fundamentalist and anti-US sentiment in Arab military establishments and the effect of these attitudes on security assistance programs, treaty agreements, the security of US military technology, and the safety of US military personnel will remain a key issue for as long as the Islamic revival persists. Despite the discipline in professional armies, middle-grade officers, noncommissioned officers, and enlisted men are exposed to the economic deprivations and social and political frustrations that give rise to strong Islamic sentiment. Actions by the governments of Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia to weed out those suspected of subversive religious sympathies or associations are one measure of their concern. Customary military secrecy, compounded by the cellular structure of most covert fundamentalist groups, pose serious difficulties for assessing with confidence the loyalty of Arab armed forces to their regimes. []

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64. The high profile US diplomatic, military, and unofficial activities in several friendly Arab countries is both a security and political liability. The conspicuousness of some US diplomatic installations has come to symbolize Western permeation of Arab culture and almost certainly invites the attention of those inclined toward militant anti-US actions. Americans—official and private—are often perceived as living exceptionally well on host government economies and thus indirectly dispossessing poorer Muslims. They are associated closely with the Arab elite and with a lifestyle that arouses the ire of fundamentalists and offends the egalitarianism of conservative and traditional Muslim believers. []

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65. The dilemmas and difficulties that the Islamic revival poses to the United States do not in themselves constitute tangible gains for the Soviet Union. Soviet leaders probably do not expect rapid or dramatic changes in their position but see any erosion of US

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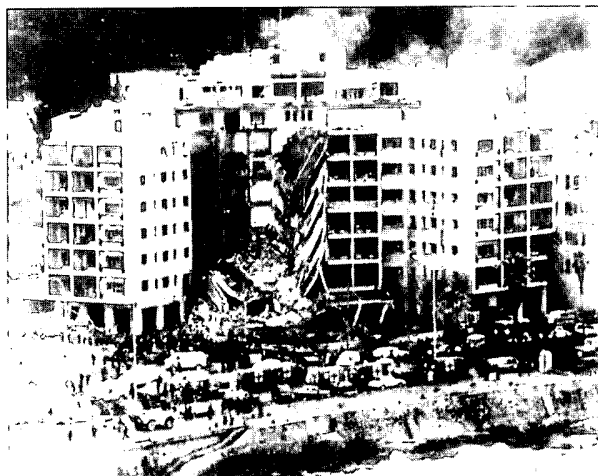


Figure 7. US Embassy Beirut. The target of anti-American fanaticism. [redacted]

credibility, whether or not Moscow's standing is enhanced, as a net gain. Additionally, Soviet policy under Gorbachev is gradually improving Moscow's position and has been adroit in taking advantage of US liabilities in the region that might be magnified by the Islamic revival. [redacted]

Strengths and Opportunities

66. The Islamic revival in the Middle East, with all it connotes for possible structural changes and pressures on Arab governments, is not monolithic and is not likely to be. Although common elements and attitudes exist, the resurgence takes a different form and moves at a different pace in individual Arab

countries. Using carefully tailored policies, constructive bilateral relations with US friends and allies are likely to be preserved. [redacted]

68. Emphasizing the incompatibilities between the Soviet Union and Islam and the dangers posed by Soviet policies might help shift fundamentalist criticism from Washington to Moscow. Fundamentalists could be reminded often that the Soviet Union rules some 45 million Muslims in Central Asia and the Caucasus and that the Soviets are brutally suppressing Muslims in Afghanistan. Where possible, friendly Arab governments might be asked to cooperate in US humanitarian assistance to anti-Soviet Afghan forces—particularly in the medical treatment of victims of Soviet terror weapons such as explosive toys. [redacted]

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ANNEX A

Profile of Arab Nations and Status of Islamic Revival

Country	Population Profile (mid-1987)	Status of Revival
Algeria	23,461,000 99 percent Sunni	Open manifestations of militant Islam suppressed by regime. Revival expanding among students and youth. Some local, violent clashes with authorities.
Bahrain ^a	464,000 100 percent Muslim 70 percent Shia, 30 percent Sunni	Well-developed fundamentalist activity in both Shia and Sunni communities. Evidence of Iranian-encouraged religious subversion.
Egypt	51,930,000 94 percent Sunni 6 percent Coptic Christian and other	Significant popular appeal with organized groups including a few violence-prone dissidents. Moderate fundamentalists in parliament. Charismatic clergy members with local and national following.
Iraq ^a	16,971,000 97 percent Muslim 60-65 percent Shia 32-37 percent Sunni	Some fundamentalist activity, particularly among Shia. Iraqi religious exiles receive support from Iran. War has rallied national sentiment but also created conditions that may foster revival in future.
Israel	4,222,000 13.1 percent Sunni	Signs of revival. Islamic activists forming new front of opposition to Israeli occupation.
Occupied territories		
West Bank	970,000 80 percent Sunni	
Gaza	560,000 99 percent Sunni	
Jordan	2,762,000 95 percent Sunni 5 percent Christian	Revival is expanding particularly among young people. Religious activities throughout society and government but largely reform minded rather than antiregime.
Kuwait ^a	1,864,000 85 percent Muslim 55 percent Sunni 30 percent Shia	Revival is expanding among both Shia and Sunni. It is particularly strong among students. Wide range of organized groups, some bent on antiregime activity and Iranian inspired terrorism.
Lebanon	3,321,000 75 percent Muslim 27 percent Sunni 41 percent Shia 7 percent Druze 25 percent Christian	Strong fundamentalist appeal among Shia. Expanding religious activism among Sunni. Likely to remain center for religious zealotry for some time. No group capable of much more than marginal expansion of local control.
Libya ^a	3,307,000 97 percent Sunni	Repressive nature of regime inhibits religious dissent. Qadhafi's version of Islam offensive to conservative religious sensibilities of many Libyans. Recent evidence of some religious agitation.
Morocco	23,361,000 99 percent Sunni	Some mass appeal. Growing attraction among young people. Moderate fundamentalist view among middle- and upper-class intellectuals. Small organized antiregime component mainly located outside the country.

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Profile of Arab Nations and Status of Islamic Revival (continued)

Country	Population Profile (mid-1987)	Status of Revival
North Yemen	6,533,000 100 percent Muslim 42 percent Shia 48 percent Sunni	Compatibility of Shias and Sunnis, and slow pace of modernization have prevented rapid development of revival. Some fundamentalists are politically active in constituent assembly and campuses.
Oman ^a	1,227,000 100 percent Muslim 25 percent Sunni 75 percent Ibadi (conservative Islamic sect)	No evidence of religiously based Muslim dissidents.
Qatar ^a	316,000 100 percent Muslim 89 percent Sunni 11 percent Shia	Local and expatriate Shia community closely monitored. Regime generally able to satisfy conservative Islamic sentiment.
Saudi Arabia ^a	14,905,000 100 percent Muslim 94 percent Sunni 6 percent Shia	Some criticism of government by students, clerics, Shias. Since attack on Great Mosque in 1979 by radical fundamentalists, no evidence of organized dissidence.
South Yemen	2,351,000 100 percent Sunni	Marxist government trying to minimize traditional Islamic influence. Fundamentalist movement driven underground in early 1970s.
Syria	11,148,000 90 percent Muslim 75 percent Sunni 11 percent Alawi 3 percent Druze 1.5 percent Shia 10 percent Christian	Muslim Brotherhood spearheaded religious challenge to government in late 1970s. Regime's devastation of city of Hamah in 1982 crippled movement.
Tunisia	7,562,000 98 percent Sunni	Substantial and expanding Islamic resurgence; strongest among urban youth and intellectuals. Occasionally violent, particularly at universities. Major regime crackdown initiated in 1987. Acts of sabotage and terrorism by religious agitators.
United Arab Emirates ^a	1,400,000 100 percent Muslim	Conservative religious society. Religious restiveness among Shias inspired by Iran.

^a Population figures for these states include significant numbers of expatriate workers.

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ANNEX B

Fundamentalism and Islamic Law

The *sharia*, or sacred law of Islam, provides for a comprehensive religious, political, and social system. In some aspects the system is absolutist and inflexible; in others it avoids extremes and adopts a spirit of reasonable compromise. The *Koran*, which is regarded by Muslims as the literal word of God, and the *Sunna*, the narrative reports on the sayings and deeds of the Prophet, are the primary and preeminent foundation of the *sharia*. The remainder of the body of Islamic law developed over several centuries and in many different places. []

Islamic fundamentalism is the school of thought that holds that the Islamic societies of today should be governed by the *sharia* as it was practiced in the early years of Islam. Unlike other Muslims—even devout ones who also believe that the *sharia* should be restored—fundamentalists reject compromise and seek the implementation of the sacred law in its entirety. Although greatly outnumbered by more moderate Muslims, their passion and activism make them the driving force of the Islamic revival. []

The *sharia* is central to the moral and cultural lives of most Muslims. Traditionalists regard the *sharia* as a set of lofty standards and aspire to live up to them. Reformists believe that adherence to the *sharia* is desirable but feasible only if its provisions are adapted to the demands of the present. Even many confirmed secularists regard the *sharia* as a source of individual moral inspiration. Generally, these Muslims accept as necessary or inevitable the existence of distinctions between political and religious matters, and they are disinclined to challenge the existing order in pursuit of *sharia* ideals. []

Fundamentalists are different. They have promoted Islam as a political ideology, which they mean to impose. They acknowledge no valid political considerations outside the embrace of their ideology. In particular, they believe that:

- Living according to the letter of the *sharia* is the primary duty of a Muslim; to abandon or even tamper with the law is a denial of faith.
- Weakness in Muslim societies and their vulnerability to outside exploitation are consequences of falling away from the law.

— Faith and thus obedience to the *sharia* influence the course of history and the destiny of the Muslim world. []

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Divergent Beliefs. Despite their shared devotion to the divine law, however, there is a great divergency to the beliefs and attitudes of fundamentalist Muslims. For one thing, they do not agree on what the provisions of the law are. Sunni Muslims developed no fewer than four great schools of jurisprudence between the eighth and 10th centuries. These schools differ considerably in their degree of strictness and the emphasis they place on such principles as consensus, analogical deduction, and public interest. While Shias regard the sixth Imam, Jafar as-Sadiq, as the founder of Shiite jurisprudence, there is a vast and heterodox array of individual Shia groups and schools of Shia religious law. []

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Apart from their disagreements about the provisions of the divine law, fundamentalists also differ over how literally it should be interpreted. Some have a retrogressive vision of Muslim life that involves a return to ancient ways; others see the sacred law as a set of principles that can be applied in a way completely compatible with modern, progressive society. Many positions exist between these extremes. []

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Similarly, fundamentalists differ over the types of tactics and intensity of effort that should be brought to bear in reforming Islamic society. Most older, established groups—such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt—have gone through a phase of revolutionary zeal, have suffered at the hand of established authority, and have as a consequence adopted an evolutionary approach to change. The members of these groups are generally judicious and opportunistic in using their energy and influence; although they have strong convictions, they tend nowadays to be relatively moderate in pursuing their goals. On the whole, the younger fundamentalists are more fanatical and inclined toward revolutionary violence, even when they have older and milder spiritual mentors. The outcast mentality of Shia Muslims has tended to make them even more zealous in their quest for change than their Sunni counterparts. []

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Conditions Under the Sharia. The most puritanical fundamentalists would ban alcohol, interest payments, gambling, music, human representations in art and pictorial media, and the public mingling of the sexes.

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They call for the strict application of all Islamic law concerned with criminal justice, family life, mortmain trusts, the Ramadan fast, the alms tax, the right to pray, and the execution of Muslim apostates. They believe that any law developed to cover changes over the 1,000 years since the *sharia* was revealed—printing, insurance, traffic, and commercial codes—must be in harmony with the spirit of the *sharia*. They hold that providing for the preeminance of the *sharia* is the only true source of political legitimacy. Therefore, they would require that all political and military offices be filled only by Muslims. They would reverse the integration of religious minorities in political life. They would purge the cultural contours and social practices of modern day Muslims of their Western and

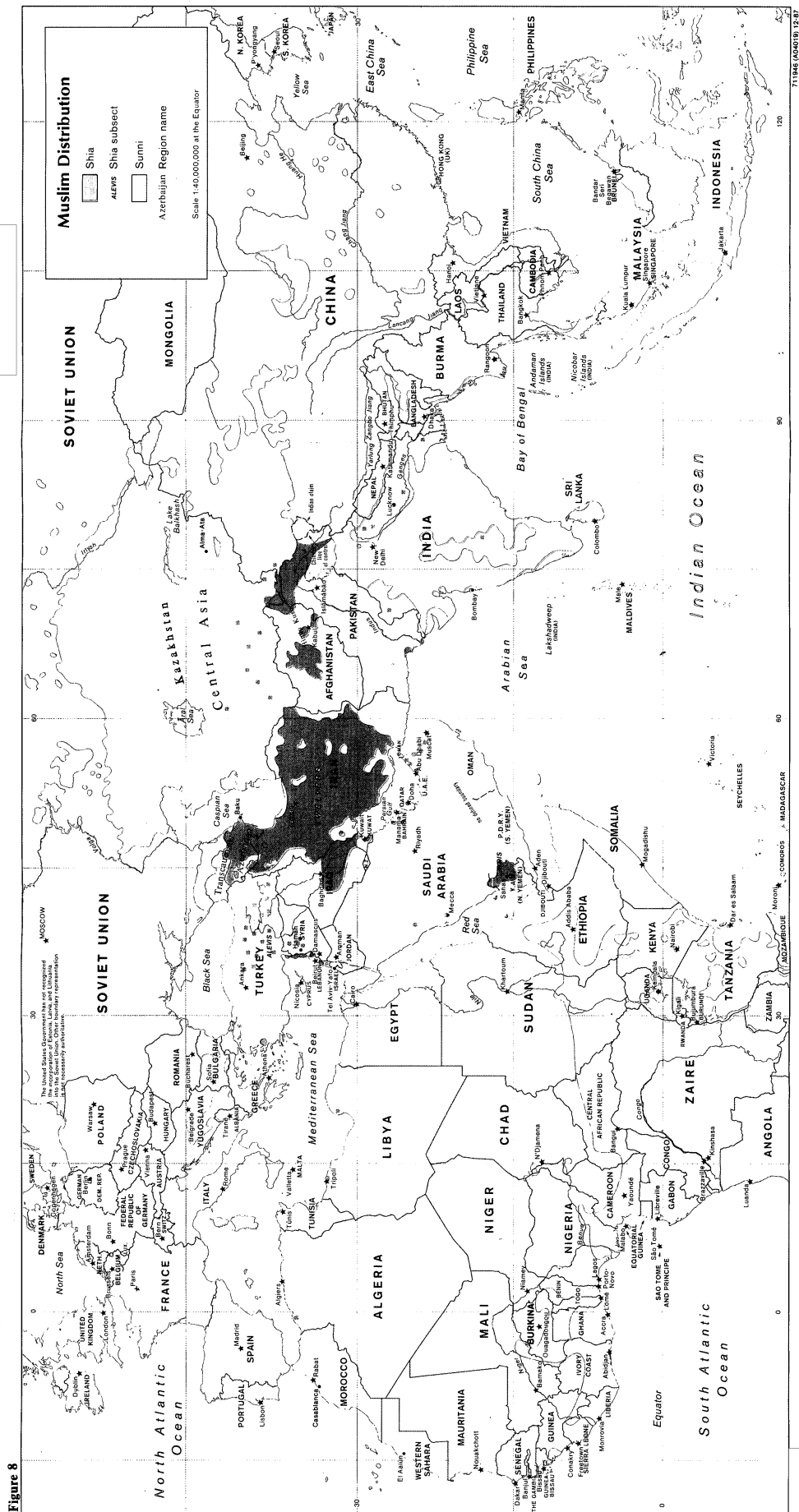
other non-Muslim features. Hour by hour and act by act, the *sharia* would govern every aspect of a Muslim's life—spiritual, social, political, cultural, and behavioral. [REDACTED]

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Over the past 20 years, the Islamic fundamentalist activists have shunted aside the Islamic reformers who dominated political thinking in the Arab world earlier in this century. Today, political regimes that have not acquired Islamic legitimacy find themselves vulnerable to challenge from religious activists, some with an evolutionary approach, some who seek immediate and drastic change. How well the various governments deal with these fundamentalist challenges will heavily influence the response of the traditional majority and shape the long-term impact of the Islamic resurgence. [REDACTED]

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